

Board Chair's 2022 AGM Report

Report to: The FOPL Board and Members
Prepared by: Paul Ainslie
Prepared on: June 8, 2022

Recommendation

1. **THAT the FOPL board and members receive this report as information.**

Report

Dear FOPL Members,

Looking back over the past year, it goes without saying FOPL has undergone a tremendous change! While there was no one, no public library system unaffected by COVID-19, FOPL under the direction of our Executive Director, Dina Stevens, your Executive, and the input of its membership has evolved into a very dynamic organization which strongly represents public libraries across Ontario.

A lot of advocacy work took place in the Fall of 2021. FOPL made some headway in our advocacy efforts. There was a meeting with Kate Graham, Ontario Liberal Party (Culture Critic) and Party Leader Stephen Del Duca. Dina met with NDP platform party chairs to discuss FOPL's priorities. A meeting took place with First Nations Consultant at the Ontario Library Service to discuss FOPL's concerns with the FNPLs funding model and immediate need for crisis intervention. OLA and FOPL attended a Tea and Chat on November 6th to connect with more First Nations Library leaders to gather personal stories and anecdotes about our FNPLs to add directly into FOPL's priority's narrative. Contact was made with the Chiefs of Ontario so that we can speak with First Nations voices as we bring First Nations priorities forward.

In November 2021, the 2020 Data Report was finalized and available on the FOPL website for review. Kudos to Vice-Chair Sabrina Saunders! Her work created a dynamic website which is well used, and FOPL continues to receive accolades for its accessibility to the appropriate resources on it.

We have also been populating the member's only area of the website with resources and have recovered the Open Media Desk legacy app for our members to benefit from in the future. The Marketing and Communications working group conducted a survey to assess website functionality incorporated the recommendations from the survey. A large change also was in creating a generic staff login for our members to give out to their library staff so they too can benefit from our members' only website. We've also incorporated Google Analytics onto our website to understand how our members are using the site and can make the appropriate improvements.



Another huge hurdle involved the migration to our new bookkeeping software by the end of November 2021. This is one of the last (and also the largest) pieces of our administrative revitalization project. Member invoices began going out immediately after was completed. Credit card payment options were created for our invoices, so customers can now easily pay us online via a service called Stripe.

Dina's Administrative Assistant, Hannah, worked at digitizing FOPL's records, worked at mining our website for proprietary content to add to our network.

In December 2021, our social media accounts were all fully operational. You can interact with FOPL on Instagram- @fopl_news, Twitter_ @FOPLNews, LinkedIn and Facebook Website- www.fopl.ca

As outlined much of the early tasks Dina was involved in, dealt with digging out following a period without anyone in her position. By early 2022, with a major reconsideration of the function of the position, and in consultation with the Executive Committee, FOPL had transitioned from "recovery mode" to focusing on capacity development and membership engagement.

Under the new fee structure developed in November 2021, all our current members had been invoiced for membership renewal, and new membership increased by 3. Dina created a membership engagement strategy which included bi-annual Caucus Meetings, info webinars, and prospective member outreach plan for non-members.

FOPL joined The National Indigenous Knowledge and Language Alliance (NIKLA) as FOPL continues to seek out allyship and support for First Nations communities and libraries across Ontario.

FOPL and a some of member libraries attended budget consultations for the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and The Ministry of Finance consultations. FOPL had full representation in each area across Ontario and heard from libraries such as Leeds and Thousand Islands, Ottawa, Blue Mountains, Dryden, and Clarence-Rockland. The Standing Committee consultations are multi-partisan, and they prepare a joint report that is tabled with the Legislature outlining their recommendations. Strategically, this is the most effective way in engaging with the opposition parties, particularly to reinforce the platform discussions we've already had as they look towards the election. We have submitted a joint Pre-Budget submission in conjunction with OLA to the Standing Committee as well as an amended version to the Ministry of Finance as well.

FOPL and OLA, along with Counsel Public Affairs made a presentation at the OLA Super Conference regarding advocacy for public libraries during the election year.

Bi-Annual Caucus Meetings were held in the Spring so Dina and the Board could be well informed of the unique challenges and interests of all our Caucus members. These meetings assisted in prioritizing the focus of our Working Groups. It is also great engagement for our members to get them interested and invested in FOPL's work.

Topics for discussion included:



- FOPL's Government Relations priorities for 2022 – soliciting feedback
- FOPL's pre-budget submission - soliciting feedback
- Challenges and interests as Small/Medium libraries
- Things you would want the Ministry to know about your library – success stories and impactful anecdotes
- Local advocacy during an election year

FOPL has made incredible progress since June 2021! Coming out of an extensive period without an Executive Director, in the middle of a pandemic, its hard not to shake my head and laugh (Even the sign on our office door was a sheet of paper taped to the wall). With Dina's guidance, and a very pro-active Board of Directors we have become a very professional organization in which we can all be proud of what has been accomplished....and look forward to even more progress as we hopefully leave COVID behind.

My thanks to everyone!

All my Best,

Paul